

# The syntax of naming constructions in European Portuguese dialects: variation and change

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## *Abstract*

*This paper discusses the syntax of naming constructions with the verb chamar 'to call'. We show that in some varieties of European Portuguese the verb chamar displays an alternation in the expression of the named entity, which is manifested by the presence/omission of the preposition a in sentences like Nós chamamos (a) isso cruzeta 'lit. We call (to) this hanger'. We will look at this phenomenon from an areal, historical and theoretical perspective, trying to relate the intricate patterns observed. We will show that the alternation with the verb chamar is attested in the course of the diachrony of Portuguese, but it is synchronically confined to two restricted geographical areas: the archipelago of the Azores and the northern region of the Portuguese continental territory. As for the theoretical analysis, we claim that both the variants involve a small clause complement structure, with the named entity in the subject position. The a that precedes the subject of the small clause is taken to be a kind of 'dummy' preposition that showed up as a strategy to resolve syntactic ambiguity in sentences exhibiting the verb chamar with the personal pronoun se (which were ambiguous between an impersonal and an anticausative reading).*

## *Keywords*

*Naming constructions, verb chamar, prepositional subjects, small clause complement structures*

## 1. Introduction

In some non-standard varieties of European Portuguese, naming constructions with the verb *chamar* ‘to call’ display the alternation in (1):

- (1) a. Nós chamamos a isso cruzeta. [a-DP DP structure]  
       we call to that *cruzeta* [hanger]  
       b. Nós chamamos isso cruzeta. [Ø-DP DP structure]  
       we call that *cruzeta* [hanger]

Sentences in (1) involve two post-verbal DPs corresponding to the named entity (*isso* ‘that’) and the name itself (*cruzeta* ‘hanger’), the difference being that the named entity in (1a) is preceded by the preposition *a*. Some non-standard varieties of European Portuguese display both (1a) and (1b); however, the standard variety only displays (1a).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper we scrutinize the alternation in naming constructions given in (1), focusing on the syntactic conditions that underlie the contrast between standard and non-standard varieties. We argue that both the variants in (1a) and (1b) involve a small clause complement structure with the named-entity in the subject position. We take the preposition *a* that precedes the subject in the variant (1a) to be a kind of a ‘dummy’ preposition that showed up at some point of the history of Portuguese as a strategy to deal with syntactic ambiguity in sentences involving the verb *chamar* associated with the personal pronoun *se*. Our claim is that the emergence of the preposition *a* in naming constructions led to the loss of the construction illustrated in (1b) in most varieties of Portuguese and concomitantly to the described synchronic variation.

## 2. Basic facts

### A. The *a*/Ø-DP alternation

In some non-standard varieties of Portuguese the naming verb *chamar* displays an alternation pattern in the expression of the named entity. As

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<sup>1</sup> In some varieties of Portuguese, the second DP in (1b) may also be preceded by the preposition *de*:

(i) Nós chamamos isso de cruzeta.  
       we call that of *cruzeta* [hanger]

However, the *de*-DP variant is unattested in the *Syntax-Oriented Corpus of Portuguese Dialects – CORDIAL-SIN*, the corpus considered in this study (see Section 3).

illustrated in (2)-(3), the named entity can be either a DP introduced by the preposition *a*<sup>2</sup> or a plain DP:<sup>3</sup>

- (2) Chamam àquilo a giba. (PIC11) [named entity: *a*-DP]  
 call.3PL to-that the *giba* [jib]
- (3) Chamávamos isto uma dorna. (FIG02) [named entity: Ø-DP]  
 called.3PL this a *dorna* [cask]

The *a*/Ø-DP alternation may coexist in the same variety, even in the speech of a single speaker, as illustrated by the following data:

- (4) Eu chamo **àquilo** varejar, sabe? Chamo **àquilo**  
 I call that *varejar* [beat.INF] know.3SG call.1SG to-that  
 varejar. (COV37)  
*varejar*
- (5) Chamam **àquilo** pestes. E depois caem aqueles...  
 call.3PL to-that *pestes* [lightening] and then fall.3PL those  
 Chamam **àquilo** pestes que caem no coiso, é tudo da  
 call.3PL that *pestes* that fall in.the ±thing is all from-the  
 trovoadas. (GRJ04)  
 thunderstorm

Note additionally that in a language like Portuguese, which has morphological case-marking in the pronominal system (more precisely, in personal pronouns), the alternation provided in (2)-(3) gives rise to overt case-marking contrasts in the instantiation of the named entity; see (6)-(7) and (8)-(9), which exhibit, respectively, accusative (*no*, *na*)<sup>4</sup> and dative (*lhe*) personal pronouns.

<sup>2</sup> Note that in (2) *àquilo* is the contraction between the demonstrative pronoun *aquilo* and the preposition *a*.

<sup>3</sup> In dialectal European Portuguese the verb *tratar* 'call' may also exhibit the same alternation, as illustrated in (i) and (ii).

(i) A gente tratamos a albacória é ao atum. (PIC14) [named entity: *a*-DP]  
 the people.1PL call.1PL the *albacória* is to-the tuna [name of a fish]

(ii) A gente tratam isso salsa-parrilha. (MIG23) [named entity: Ø-DP]  
 the people.3PL call.3PL that *salsa-parrilha* [name of a plant]

<sup>4</sup> In European Portuguese the accusative forms of the personal pronoun are: *o*, *a*, *os*, *as*. The variants *no*, *na*, *nos*, *nas* are used after a verbal form ending with a nasal diphthong.

- (6) Chamavam-**no** boeiro das vacas. (UNS01)  
 called.3PL-him[CL.ACC] *boeiro das vacas* [keeper of the cows,  
 herdsman]
- (7) Chamavam-**na** Dona Eufrosina. (GRJ36)  
 called.3PL-her[CL.ACC] *Dona Eufrosina* [proper name]
- (8) Chamávamos-**lhe** um arcaz. (FIG02)  
 called.1PL-him[CL.DAT] a *arcaz* [piece of furniture]
- (9) Chamavam-**lhe** a Basilissa. (COV02)  
 called.3PL-it[CL.DAT] the *Basilissa* [proper name]

## B. Word order

In the naming constructions with *chamar* the named entity and the name itself do not appear in a fixed word order. If both constituents are VP-internal, the named entity may precede or follow the name itself, as illustrated below:

		V	named entity	name itself
(10)	[ <i>a-DPDP</i> ]	Chamavam	ao lugar	o Branco (CDR34)
		called.3PL	to-the place	the <i>Branco</i> [proper name]
(11)	[ <i>Ø-DPDP</i> ]	Chamávamos	isto	uma dorna (FIG02)
		called.1PL	that	a <i>dorna</i> [cask]

		V	name itself	named entity
(12)	[ <i>a-DPDP</i> ]	A gente chama	canários	a esses do papo (FLF08)
		the people call	<i>canários</i> [canaries]	to those of-the crop
(13)	[ <i>Ø-DPDP</i> ]	Também chamavam	as andilhas	aquilo (CDR24)
		also called.3PL	[a type of saddle]	that

There are two factors that can explain reordering: (i) heaviness of the named entity and (ii) assignment of information focus to the named entity. If

the named entity is heavier than the name itself, it may be postponed (see (14)-(15)).

- (14) (...) que se chamava cepos **aquilo com**  
that se[CL] called.3SG *cepos* [piece of wood] that with  
**que se fazia as galochas para calçar.** (CDR25)  
which se[CL] made.3SG the wellingtons to wear
- (15) A gente chama os porcos **àqueles que são os próprios**  
thepeople call.3SG the *porcos* [pigs] to-those that are the ones  
para matar. (COV04)  
to kill

Information structure also seems to play an important role in the relative order of the named entity and the name itself. It has been claimed that in some languages (Contemporary European Portuguese included) the assignment of narrow information focus drives the constituent expressing new information to the rightmost position of the sentence (cf. Costa 1998, 2004). This approach accounts for sentences exhibiting name itself-named entity order: in (16) and (17) the named entity surfaces in the rightmost position because it is the new information provided by the context. By contrast, if the name itself expresses new information, it stays in the rightmost position, as for instance in (2) and (3):

- (16) E punha as andilhas por cima. Também  
and put.3SG the *andilhas* [a type of saddle] on-the top also  
chamavam as andilhas **aquilo.** (CDR24)  
called.3PL the *andilhas* that
- (17) INQ Então e o almoço a que horas é?  
‘And at what time is the lunch?’  
INF Cá chamam-lhe o jantar. Nós lá  
here call.3PL-it[CL.DAT] the *jantar* [name of a meal] we there  
chamamos o almoço **ao meio-dia**  
call.1PL the *almoço* [name of a meal] to-the midday  
e o jantar **à noite.** (GRJ46)  
and the *jantar* [name of a meal] to-the night

### C. Related naming construction with *chamar*

The verb *chamar* may also enter another naming construction, where it obligatorily selects the pronoun *se*, as in (19).

- (18) A mãe chama o filho Pedro.  
 the mother calls the son *Pedro* [proper name]
- (19) O filho chama-se Pedro.  
 the son call-*se*[CL] *Pedro* [proper name]  
 ‘The son is called Pedro’

We assume that the naming verb *chamar* in (19) can be derived from the one in (18) via the lexical operation of reduction (see Levin & Rappaport 1995), which affects the external theta-role and derives a one-place verb. Under this view, the verb *chamar* in (18) is a two-place verb, whereas the one in (19) is a one-place verb that selects a small clause complement (and involves DP-raising to the subject position).

Note that, abstracting away from the number of arguments involved, a similar derivation has been proposed for the causative alternation exemplified in (20)–(21):

- (20) O armador afundou o navio. [transitive variant]  
 the ship-owner sank the ship
- (21) O navio afundou-se. (Duarte 2003: 306) [unaccusative variant]  
 the ship sank-*se*[CL]

Crucially, there are remarking similarities between the patterns in (18)–(19) and (20)–(21). Just like the unaccusative variant of *afundar* in (21), the one-place verb *chamar* in (19) is associated with the anticausative pronoun *se*.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, *chamar-se* patterns with *afundar-se* in not being able to co-occur with agent-oriented adverbs (see (22) and (23)) and purpose clauses (Manzini 1983) (see (24) and (25)):

<sup>5</sup> The non-argumental status of *se* in (19) can be confirmed by the fact that it cannot be involved in clitic doubling constructions (Matos 2003) (see (i)).

(i) \*O rapaz chama-se João a si próprio.  
 the boy call-*se*[CL] *João* [proper name] to him self

Moreover, in across-the-board clitic extraction the anticausative *se* must take a verb out of the coordinate structure as its host (Matos 2003) (see (iia–b)).

(ii) a. \*Estas coisas não só se chamam cruzetas,  
 these things not only *se*[CL] call.3PL *cruzetas* [type of hanger]  
 como também chamam cabides.  
 as also call.3PL *cabides* [hangers]

b. Estas coisas têm-se não só chamado cruzetas,  
 these things have.3PL- *se*[CL] not only called *cruzetas* [type of hanger]  
 como também chamado cabides.  
 as also called *cabides* [hangers]

- (22) a. O armador afundou o navio deliberadamente.  
the ship-owner sank the ship deliberately  
b. \*O navio afundou-se deliberadamente.  
the ship sank-se[CL] deliberately
- (23) a. Nós chamamos essas coisas cruzetas deliberadamente.  
we call these things *cruzetas* [hangers] deliberately.  
b. \*Essas coisas chamam-se cruzetas deliberadamente.  
those things call.3PL-se[CL] *cruzetas* [hangers] deliberately
- (24) a. O armador afundou o navio para receber o seguro.  
the ship-owner sank the ship to collect the insurance  
b. \*O navio afundou-se para receber o seguro.  
the ship sank-se[CL] to collect the insurance
- (25) a. Nós chamamos essas coisas cruzetas para as  
we call.1PL these things *cruzetas* [hangers] to them[CL]  
distinguirmos dos cabides.  
distinguish.1PL from-the *cabides* [a type of hanger]  
b. \*Essas coisas chamam-se cruzetas para as  
those things call.3PL-se[CL] *cruzetas* [hangers] to them[CL]  
distinguirmos dos cabides.  
distinguish.1PL from-the *cabides* [a type of hanger]

### 3. Geographical distribution and historical remarks

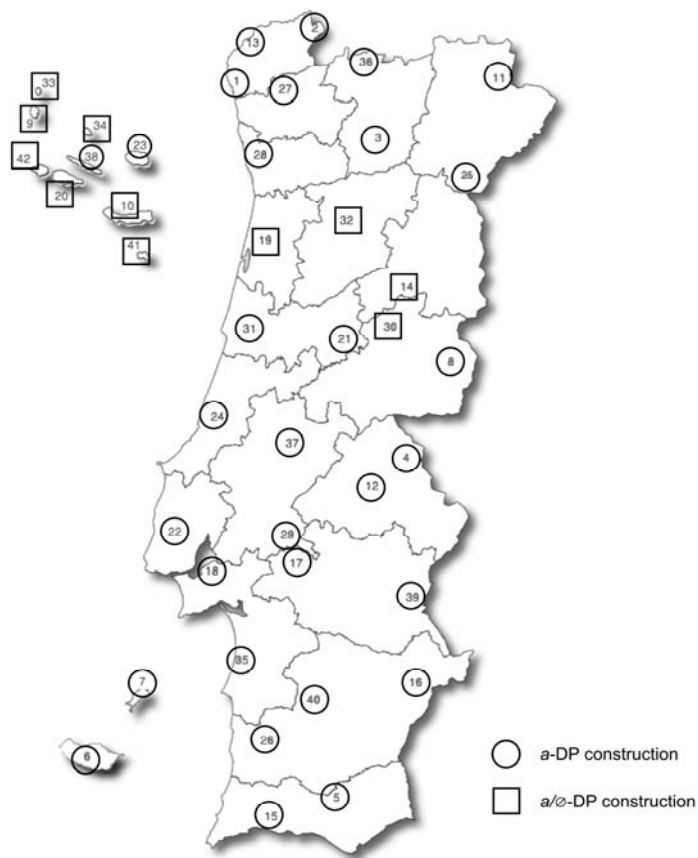
The dialectal data inspected in this paper are drawn from the *Syntax-Oriented Corpus of Portuguese Dialects – CORDIAL-SIN*.<sup>6,7</sup> In this corpus the areal distribution of the *a/Ø-DP* alternation shows a clear asymmetry: all the EP varieties represented in the corpus display the *a/Ø-DP* structure, but only 11 of them exhibit the *Ø-DP* variant.

<sup>6</sup> *CORDIAL-SIN* is a corpus of spoken dialectal EP that collects a geographically representative body of excerpts of spontaneous and semi-directed speech, selected from the oral interviews gathered by the Linguistic Variation Team at the *Linguistics Center of University of Lisbon* in the course of several Dialect Geography projects. The corpus covers 42 locations within the (continental and insular) territory of Portugal and it compiles about 600 000 words. *CORDIAL-SIN* has been funded by FCT (PRAXIS XXI/P/PLP/13046/1998, POSI/PLP/33275/1999, POCTI/LIN/46980/2002 and PTDC/LIN/71559/2006).

<sup>7</sup> The examples provided in this paper which were not drawn from *CORDIAL-SIN* were constructed with the help of native speakers of dialects that display alternation between the two variants under inspection.

The 11 locations are confined to two restricted geographical areas: the archipelago of the Azores and the northern region of the continental territory.<sup>8</sup> Map 1 shows the geographical distribution of the *a/Ø*-DP naming constructions within the CORDIAL-SIN corpus.

Map I. Distribution of *a/Ø*-DP naming constructions with *chamar* in CORDIAL-SIN



In the varieties that register the *a/Ø*-DP alternation, the relative frequency of the two structures is not uniform. The values are summarized in Table I. Map II represents the incidence of the *Ø*-DP variant in the relevant dialects.

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, these areas fall within the limits of two well-known dialect areas in EP, defined on the basis of phonetic and lexical variants: the area of the Azorean dialects and a sub-area of the Northern dialects (the area of *Southern Minho*, *Douro Litoral* and *Beiras*) (Cintra 1971).



Table I. *a/Ø*-DP naming constructions in CORDIAL-SIN – relative frequency

	Ø-DP construction	<i>a</i> -DP construction
Ponta Garça (Ponta Delgada)	82%	18%
Figueiró da Serra (Guarda)	67%	33%
Cedros (Horta)	64%	36%
Covo (Aveiro)	59%	41%
Granjal (Viseu)	56%	44%
Santo Espírito (Ponta Delgada)	44%	56%
Bandeiras, Cais do Pico (Horta)	43%	57%
Graciosa (Angra do Heroísmo)	29%	71%
Unhais da Serra (Castelo Branco)	25%	75%
Fajãzinha (Horta)	12,5%	87,5%
Corvo (Horta)	11%	89%

Map II. Incidence of the Ø-DP structure



Interestingly, if we look at the diachrony of Portuguese, we also observe cases of *a/Ø-DP* alternation in the expression of the named entity, as illustrated in (26)-(29):

- (26) E esta scomuhõ chama a Igreja anathema  
(CIPM, 14th century)  
and this excommunication call the church *anathema*  
[ecclesiastic term]
- (27) Louco chamã todo homẽ ou molher que há perdido  
*louco* [crazy] call.3PL every man or woman that has lost  
o siso (CIPM, 14th century)  
the mind
- (28) chama padre ao que faz a forma do corpo  
call.3SG *padre* [Father] to-the-one that makes the form of-the body  
do homẽ naturalmẽte (CIPM, 14th century)  
of-the man naturally
- (29) E porẽ Boecio chama aas dignidades sôdbrasas,  
and however Boecio calls to-the dignities *sôdbrasas* [shady]  
porque som taaes come a sôdbra (CIPM, 15th century)  
because are such as the shadow

Moreover, examples (30)-(33) show that, if the named entity is expressed by a personal pronoun, the accusative/dative contrasts are also documented:

- (30) E se omẽ doutra ley se tornar crischaa  
and if man of-other religion *se*[CL] become.INF Christian  
e alguẽ o chamar tornadiço (CIPM, 13th century)  
and someone him[CL.ACC] call.FUT.SUBJ. *tornadiço* [apostate]
- (31) A outra pola marauilhosa onrra que toma quãdo  
and another for-the-marvelous honor that has when  
bautizã e o chama cristão (CIPM, 14th century)  
christen and him[CL.ACC] call.3SG *cristão* [Cristian]
- (32) e por esso **lhy** chamarõ Credo in Deum  
(CIPM, 14th century)  
and by that him. [CL.DAT]called.3PL *Credo in Deum*  
[name of a praying]
- (33) nũca **lhe** elle rrey chamara comde (CIPM, 15th century)  
never him[CL.DAT] ±the king call.PLUSPERF *comde* [count]

In the light of the geographic and historical considerations presented above, it becomes clear that the question that needs to be answered is not *why some Portuguese dialects display the a-Ø-DP alternation*, but instead *why some Portuguese dialects have lost it*.<sup>9</sup>

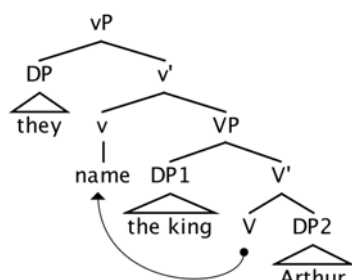
## 4. The syntax of EP naming constructions

### 4.1. Competing analyses

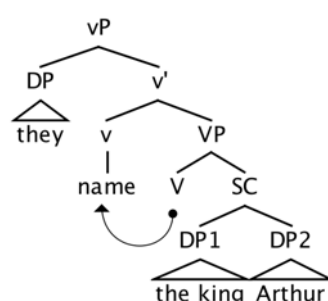
There are two competing analyses that can apparently account for the syntax of naming constructions: the ditransitive structure (34a) and the small clause complement structure (34b) (see Matushansky 2006).

(34)

a. ditransitive structure (simplified)



b. small clause complement structure (simplified)



In Section 4.2. we will provide three arguments showing that naming constructions with *chamar* involve a small clause complement structure and not a ditransitive structure. For ease of exposition, in the examples provided in 4.2. we will only consider the Ø-DP alternant; note however that the same results are obtained for the variant with *a*.

<sup>9</sup> According to an anonymous reviewer, this question needs to be qualified, as the historical data reported may mirror the variation found in contemporary European Portuguese. Note however that the Latin verb *vocare* 'to call' only displayed the Ø-DP DP structure (cf. *animal ... quem uocamus hominem*, Cic. *Leg.* 1, 22, translation: the animal ... which we call man). Hence, the question of how the Ø-DP DP is lost in some dialects is relevant (quite independently of the exact time in which the change takes place).

## 4.2. Arguments in favor of a small clause complement structure

The constituent italicized in (35) closely resembles a predicate semantically, in that it indicates the property (in this case, the name) attributed to *isso*. Under this view, (35) can be conceived as involving a two-place verb *chamar*, which selects a subject and a small-clause complement. The small clause complement contains a subject, the named entity (*isso*), and a predicate, the name itself (*cruzeta*).

- (35) Nós chamamos *isso* *cruzeta*.  
       we call           that *cruzeta* [hanger]

This analysis is supported by a number of syntactic arguments, which are listed in A. through C. below.

### A. Passives

If the name itself and the named entity were both complements of the verb (in a ditransitive construction), then we would expect both to passivize. However, the contrast in (37) indicates that only the name itself can passivize.

- (36) É chamado aquilo a bexiga. (COV08)  
       is called       that     the *bexiga* [bladder]
- (37) a. Aquilo é chamado a bexiga.  
       that     is called     the *bexiga* [bladder]  
       b. \*A bexiga é chamada aquilo.  
       the *bexiga* [bladder] is called     that

The contrast in (37) is, however, predicted under a small clause complement analysis. Note that if a typical verb selecting a small clause complement is involved (as *considerar* ‘to consider’ in (38)), the same pattern is obtained: the subject of the small clause can passivize (see (39a)), but the predicate cannot (see (39b)).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that the DP *a bexiga* ‘the bladder’ can passivize when it is base-generated in an A-position:

- (i) a. O médico suturou a bexiga.  
       the doctor sutured the bladder  
       b. A bexiga foi suturada pelo médico.  
       the bladder was sutured by the doctor

- (38) O João considera aquilo a bexiga.  
the João considers that the bladder
- (39) a. Aquilo é considerado a bexiga.  
that is considered the bladder  
b. \*A bexiga é considerada aquilo.  
the bladder is considered that

## B. Pronominalization

As already mentioned in Section 2, the named entity can be replaced by the accusative form of the personal pronoun (see (6) and (7) above).<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the name itself can only be spelled-out as a pronominal predicate, like *assim* (see (40b)). No other pronoun (in particular the accusative personal pronoun *o* in (40c)) can express this constituent.

- (40) a. Chamei o meu filho Pedro.  
called.1SG the my son *Pedro*.  
b. Chamei o meu filho assim.  
called.1SG the my son like-this  
c. \*Chamei-o o meu filho  
called.1SG-it[CL.ACC] the my son

The contrasting behavior of the named entity and the name itself is unexpected if both constituents were complements of the verb *chamar* in a ditransitive structure. This contrast receives, however, a straightforward explanation if we assume that the name itself is a predicate. In actual fact, if a typical verb with a small-clause complement is involved (such as *considerar* ‘to consider’), the same contrast is obtained:

- (41) Considero As artes e os livros um dos  
consider.1SG As artes e os livros [name of the blog] one of-the  
melhores blogues portugueses – pelo menos, eu considero-o  
best blogs Portuguese at least I consider-it[CL.ACC]  
assim.  
like-this

<sup>11</sup> Note that under the hypothesis we are pursuing here the named entity is the subject of a small clause, but it does not receive case from within the clause in the absence of Agr. It is *chamar* that assigns accusative case to the named entity via Exceptional Case Marking. We will return to this topic in Section 4.3.

### C. Definite article omission

In naming constructions if the name itself is a proper name, it licenses definite article omission, as illustrated in (42)-(43):

- (42) Chamavam-no            Evaristo (GRJ52)  
       call.3PL.him[CL.ACC] *Evaristo* [proper name]
- (43) Chamavam-na            dona    Eufrosina (GRJ36)  
       call.3PL.her[CL.ACC] *dona Eufrosina* [proper name]

By contrast, the preproprial definite article is required in contexts where the proper name occurs in a complement position, as in (44). This suggests that the proper name in (42)-(43) is a predicate and not the complement of the verb *chamar*.

- (44) Vi                    \*(o)    Evaristo.  
       saw.1SG            \*(the) *Evaristo* [proper name]

### 4.3. The analysis

The empirical data presented in A-to-C above provide crucial evidence in favor of the hypothesis that the Ø-DP variant is derived from a structure like (34b). Under this analysis, the named entity is the subject of a small clause, but it does not receive case from within the clause in the absence of Agr. It is *chamar* that assigns accusative case to the named entity via Exceptional Case Marking (ECM).<sup>12</sup> Note that, as already mentioned in fn. 11, this mechanism derives without further ado the accusative form of the personal pronoun found, for instance, in (6)-(7) above.

Now the time has come to demonstrate how the small clause complement hypothesis can account for the *a*-DP variant given in (45) and (46):

- (45) Chamam    **àquilo**    a            giba. (PIC11)  
       call.3 pl    to.that    the        *giba* [jib]
- (46) Chamávamos-**lhe**    um            arcaz. (FIG02)  
       called.1PL him:cl.dat a            *arcaz* [piece of furniture]

<sup>12</sup> The term Exceptional Case Marking was coined by Chomsky (1981) to describe non-canonical structural case assignment to an embedded subject by a certain class of verbs. Much discussion over the past thirty years has been devoted to specifying the precise nature of the structural restrictions involved in this configuration. For more details on the governing/checking conditions on Exceptional Case Marking, see Pesetsky & Torrego (2011), Chomsky (2005) and Lasnik & Saito (1999).

The major challenge here is to explain the fact that a PP may occupy the subject position of a small clause.<sup>13</sup> Building on the distinction between functional/non-thematic (or ‘dummy’) and lexical/thematic prepositions (see Rauh 1993; Tremblay 1996; Rooryck 1996, a.o.), we would like to suggest that the named entity in the *a*-DP structure is not a true PP, but actually a DP (bearing a theme theta-role) preceded by the ‘dummy’ preposition *a*.<sup>14</sup> There are four empirical facts pointing towards the ‘dummy’ status of *a*.

A. The constituent preceded by *a* (*a esses bolos* ‘to those cakes’ in (47a)) may be passivized (see (47b)), which is typical of non-prepositional phrases.<sup>15</sup>

- (47) a. Chamam **a esses bolos** esses de Peniche.  
           call.3PL to those cakes *esses de Peniche* [name of a cake]  
       b. **Esses bolos** são chamados esses de Peniche.  
           those cakes are called *esses de Peniche* [name of a cake]
- (48) a. Demos o livro **à Maria**.  
           gave.1PL the book to-the Maria  
       b. \***A Maria** foi dada o livro.  
           the Maria was given the book

B. There are some fossilized expressions that are taken to involve a DP playing the role of direct object preceded by *a* (see (49)). Moreover, there are some other dialectal verbs that display the *a*-DP pattern in the expression of the direct object (see (50)-(51)).

- (49) a. amar **a Deus**  
           love.INF A God  
       b. temer **a Deus** (Duarte 2003: 287)  
           fear.INF A God

<sup>13</sup> The peculiar behavior of *chamar* in sentences like (45)-(46) has already been noticed by some traditional grammarians. According to Bechara (1961) and Cunha & Cintra (1984: 147), *chamar* is the only Portuguese verb that requires a predicate of an indirect object.

<sup>14</sup> Some grammarians have already suggested that the exceptionality of *chamar* is tied to its ability to take a direct object preceded by the preposition *a*. Under this view, the verb *chamar* requires a predicate of the direct object, just like other verbs such as *considerar* ‘to consider’ and *nomear* ‘nominate’ (see Silveira Bueno 1958; Brandão 1963; Kury 1986; Luft 2002, cited in Silva 2010). A similar view is adopted by Fernández-Ordóñez (1999: 1335) and Salcedo (1999: 1792) for the Spanish verb *llamar* ‘to call’.

<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that the speakers whose dialect only displays the *a*-DP variant also allow for the passive construction. This clearly indicates that the passive can be derived from the prepositional (active) variant.

(50) Ia                    ajudar aí        **aos outros rapazes**. pois. (CLC28)  
       was-going-to    help.INF there    A-the    other    boys    yes

(51) Depois eu andei, então, a ensinar-**lhe**                    e        ele  
       then    I was then to teach.INF-him[CL.DAT] and    he  
       diz    assim: (OUT15)  
       says    like-this

C. In contemporary European Portuguese, clitic doubling involves the preposition *a* when it doubles either a direct object or an indirect object, which proves its ambiguous status (between a dative case marker and a dummy preposition):

(52) O    João    encontrou-o            a    ele.  
       the    *João*    met-him[CL.ACC]    to    him

(53) O    João    telefonou-lhe            a    ele.  
       the    *João*    rang-him[CL.DAT]    to    him

D. It is usually assumed that a small clause can take a DP as its subject but not a PP (see Schein 1995: 54; Demonte & Masullo 1999):

- (54) a. Encontrei    o    João    aborrecido.  
       found.1SG    the    *João*    bored  
       b. \*Dei        um livro    ao    João    aborrecido.  
       gave.1SG    a    book    to-the *João*    bored

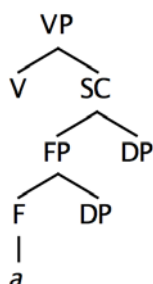
However, the secondary predicates may be associated with internal arguments that, not being true PPs, superficially exhibit a prepositional form (in Duarte's (2003) terms) (see (55)). This clearly indicates that the status of the preposition determines the availability of secondary predication (and, consequently, the possibility of having a PP as the subject of a small clause).

(55) a. Os    homens gostam delas    louras.  
       the    men    like    of-them blond

Given this evidence, we propose, along with Brugè & Brugger (1996), that the direct object of the verb *chamar* is dominated by a functional projection whose head can be filled by *a*, as depicted in (56). When *a* is spelled-out, it assigns dative case to its complement. This explains the presence of the dative pronoun *lhe* in sentences like (46).



(56)



## 5. Accounting for synchronic variation

As we have seen in Section 3., EP dialects diverge with respect to the availability of  $\emptyset$ -DP structure with the verb *chamar*. The majority of EP varieties display only the *a*-DP structure, the alternation between *a*/ $\emptyset$ -DP structures being restrained to a limited group of Azorean and Northern varieties. In this section we will attempt to explain the synchronic variation found in contemporary EP as a consequence of a change that took place in the history of Portuguese. Moreover, we will suggest that the *se* construction gives rise to a structural ambiguity that has a twofold effect: (i) the loss of  $\emptyset$ -DP structure and (ii) the emergence of the preposition *a*.

In tandem with the  $\emptyset$ -DP structure, documented since the earlier Portuguese texts, in the course of the 14th century the verb *chamar* also starts to be associated with the passive pronoun *se*:

- (57) El rey dō Enrryque, que estava ã França ã hũu castelo  
 ±the king dō Enrryque who was in France in a castle  
 que **se chama** Pedra Pertusa (CAXP, 14th century)  
 that *se*[CL] call.3SG Pedra Pertusa [proper name]

- (58) E este departimẽto **se chama** ã latĩ diuorciũ. (15th century)  
 and this separation *se*[CL] call.3SG in Latin *diuorciũ* [divorce]

- (59) E este **se chamará** prudẽte negociador  
 and this *se*[CL] call.FUT.3SG *prudẽte negociador* [prudent merchant]  
 e nõ homẽ prudẽte. (CAXP, 14th century)  
 and not *homẽ prudẽte* [prudent man]

- (60) hũ escudeyro do comde que **se** **chamava**  
 a squire of-the count that *se*[CL] called.3SG  
 Pedr'Eannes Catallã (CIPM, 15th century)  
 Pedr'Eannes Catallã [proper name]

Assuming, along with Martins (2003, 2005), that passive *se* is lost in Portuguese after the 15th century, we claim that sentences with *chamar* like the one in (61) became syntactically ambiguous between an impersonal construction (with a nominative *se*) and an unaccusative construction (with an anticausative *se*) (cf. Section 2, point C).

- (61) Chama-se esse lugar Ribeira de Alfageja.  
 call.3SG-*se*[CL] that place *Ribeira de Alfageja* [proper name]

The sentence in (61) can be interpreted as involving:

A. The two-place verb *chamar* in a Ø-DP construction, with the impersonal *se* corresponding to the external argument of the verb and the DP *esse lugar* being the subject of a small clause;

B. The one-place verb *chamar* in an anticausative construction, taking the DP *esse lugar* as its subject.

Somewhat tentatively we would like to suggest that the appearance of the preposition *a* in naming constructions is a strategy to solve the ambiguity described above.<sup>16</sup> In contrast to (61), if the preposition is introduced, the pronoun *se* in (62) can only be analyzed as a nominative *se*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> According to the *Dictionary of Medieval Portuguese Verbs* (DVPM – Dicionário de Verbos do Português Medieval), the Ø-DP variant is attested since the earlier Portuguese documents, whereas the *a*-DP variant is not attested until the 14th century.

<sup>17</sup> We are aware that the proposal put forth in section 5 is not fully compatible with the chronology proposed by Martins (2003, 2005) for the emergence of the impersonal *se* in the history of Portuguese. We claim that in the 14th century *a*-insertion takes place in order to avoid ambiguity between impersonal and anticausative use of the pronoun *se* in naming constructions. However, according to Martins (2003, 2005), impersonal *se* constructions only emerge in the 16th century. This is an open problem that requires further research. Nevertheless, one hypothesis that is worth exploring is that impersonal *se* may have arisen before the 16th century. Evidence for this comes from earlier occurrences of non-agreeing *se* constructions, as in (i)-(iv), taken from Fiéis (2003: 431-432):

(i) per o qual *se* defende todas mentiras (CIPM, year 1433/1438?)  
 by the which *se*[CL] forbid.3SG all lies  
 (ii) sobre o defendymento *se* despede ho ouro e a prata (CIPM, XIV)  
 upon the defense *se*[CL] spend the gold and the silver  
 (iii) nom he razom que *se* tenha ceumes nem duvyda (CIPM, 1433/1438?)  
 non is reason that *se*[CL] have jealousy nor doubt  
 (iv) ese anno ou annos que *se* asy perder (CIPM, 1450)  
 that year or years that *se*[CL] as-such loose

- (62) Chama-se a esse lugar Ribeira de Alfageja.  
 call.3SG-se[CL] A that place Ribeira de Alfageja [proper name]

As a consequence, the utterances manifesting Ø-DP decreased significantly in the primary linguistic data. Because the available triggering experiences changed in a critical way, children converged on a new grammar, which does not display Ø-DP. As such, in these dialects the two-place verb *chamar* started to be expressed only by the *a*-DP variant.

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